

HOUSING BETTERMENT

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HOUSING PROGRESS IN MASSACHUSETTS.

The Law for Towns and the Law for Cities.

As our readers know the Massachusetts legislature last year passed a Tenement House Law for Towns. This law is permissive, that is each town may adopt it or not as it sees fit. It was enacted too late to get into most of the town warrants, as the town elections are usually held in the spring; still a number of towns adopted the law last year and others followed their example this spring. Those which have adopted it are: Arlington, Belmont, Stoneham, Watertown, Weymouth, Winthrop, Braintree, Lexington, Milton, North Andover, Walpole, Wenham and Weston.

This law covers most of the points which must be covered by an adequate housing code and marks a great step in advance. The chief point made in the arguments for it, however, is that it tends to discourage the erection of "three deckers," the Massachusetts form of tenement house, and to encourage the building of single-family and two-family houses.

This year those interested in housing betterment have introduced a similar measure which applies to all cities except Boston. This bill too became law. As illustrating the attitude of those who are trying to protect their communities from tenement house invasion and also the danger of half way measures, we quote a letter used in the Wakefield campaign. Wakefield became aware of its danger some time ago and under the leadership of the Wakefield Improvement Association adopted an amendment to its by-laws to the following effect: "No building of three or more stories in height above the ground intended to be used as a dwelling for three or more families shall hereafter be erected in Wakefield un-

less the exterior thereof, including all exterior walls and the roof, shall be made of fire proof materials."

This would have been encouraging had it been adopted several years ago but coming as it did just before the presentation of a more nearly adequate measure, it aided in defeating that measure. For on January 20, 1913, a town meeting voted not to adopt the Tenement House Law for Towns.

Following is the letter used in the campaign to secure the above quoted amendment to the by-laws. It was printed in the Wakefield Item.

Editor Daily Item:

In article 36 of the town warrant, the Improvement Association and Advisory Betterment Committee calls the attention of the voters to the problem of the wooden "three-decker," and provides a means of relief. No claim of originality is made in this connection, as the subject has been widely investigated by such organizations as the National Housing Association of New York, the American Civic League of Harrisburg, Pa., the Massachusetts Civic League, and Boston, 1915, and in every case the investigators have condemned the wooden three-decker as undesirable.

J. Randolph Coolidge, Jr., made the statement in our town hall a short time since, that "the 'three-decker' coming into a street of single houses blights that street * * * and there is usually the desire on the part of the earlier inhabitants to sell and move away, and then they find that their houses have lost their value and will not bring anything like what it would cost to build them." Mr. Coolidge is a prominent Boston architect and vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce.

The modern "three-decker" is by its very construction a fire-trap, constituting a menace to buildings around it, and an expense to the community for fire protection. It depreciates values wherever it appears, thus driving out present home owners and discouraging future ones. It is small inducement for the home seeker to know that the gates are wide open for the "three-decker" on the vacant lot near the house he is contemplating buying, and it is small protection that a town is giving its householders in allowing a type of building that will rob neighborhoods of values and house owners of money that has in good faith been put into homes.

Our town has been very free from this type of building, but we have only to look at Dorchester, Roxbury, Chelsea and portions of cities still nearer to see its possibilities. At the present time there is nothing to prevent a Boston real estate speculator from coming to our town, buying land, such as has been opened

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up on Berkshire street, and erecting rows of "three-deckers." This would be most disastrous to the growth of the town and yet there has nothing been done to safeguard our streets from such conditions. We are fortunate in having the opportunity of profiting by the experience of other cities and we ask the voters to give the property holders of this town the guarantee that the conditions invariably brought about by the introduction of the modern "three-decker" will not be possible in our community.

Very truly yours,

H. B. MANSFIELD,
Sec'y Wakefield Improvement Association
and Advisory Betterment Committee.

Everett, like Wakefield, this year passed an ordinance that practically forbids the erection of flat-roofed, three-deckers of the third and fourth classes.

"The Law Works Admirably."

Mr. Elmer S. Forbes, Chairman of the Housing Committee of the Massachusetts Civic League, writes that the Law for Towns "seems to be working admirably, and in all these places (the thirteen towns that have adopted it) there is a feeling of great satisfaction that they have safeguarded their future development. The practical effect of the law is to prevent the erection of any frame dwellings for more than two families. If the dwelling is to house more than two families it must be of fire-proof construction, which really prohibits tenement houses."

Among the cities of Massachusetts Salem has taken a leading part in securing housing legislation. It co-operated with the Civic League in securing the Tenement House Law for cities and meanwhile passed an ordinance restricting wooden dwellings to three stories or 40 feet in height and requiring that a ten foot space be left between adjoining buildings unless the exposed wall is of brick, cement or other fire-proof construction unbroken by apertures. This ordinance without the tenement house law would be, of course, ridiculously inadequate as a housing measure. The thought of its framers was obviously concentrated upon protection of property to the exclusion of any ideas about safeguarding the health and lives of those who inhabit the property; but it marks the beginning in a very conservative community.

Boston Raises its Standards.

Boston has been one of the very few cities in the United States which make four families instead of three the measure of a tenement house. This past winter it caught up with the main body of the procession when the Legislature enacted a new law which, however, deals only with sanitary conditions. For years Thomas Jordan of the Health Department has led the fight to secure this advance. Three years ago a bill was introduced providing for the inclusion of three family houses within the tenement house law, but this bill dealt merely with fireproof construction. It was defeated. The following year a bill dealing only with sanitary conditions was introduced. It was defeated.

Though Boston is to be congratulated on its progress it is still far from having secured adequate housing legislation. The argument for the new law was based upon the contention that conditions in three family dwellings are often as bad as in those containing four or more families. In New York City where the three family house has been legally a tenement for many years precisely the same argument is used in the effort to extend the law to cover two family houses. It is matter of public record that two family houses have recently been erected that are far worse dwellings than the larger multiple dwellings, houses with windowless rooms and dark halls and inadequate provision for privacy. Some of the cities have recognized this tendency as inevitable and so have included two family houses in their tenement legislation. But the leaders have recognized that this is not going far enough and so they have enacted not tenement but housing legislation, for investigation showed them that bad conditions prevail in many single family houses. So the latest legislation provides for all dwellings and divides them into three classes, single family, two family and multiple dwellings, so recognizing the three grades of desirability.

But meanwhile Boston having advanced a step in legislation has still to show that it takes more than an academic interest in housing betterment. Laws do not enforce themselves. Mr. Jordan estimates that he will need fifteen additional inspectors to look after the 35,000 buildings which have

been added to the 7,500 over which he previously had supervision.

The Homestead Commission Gets Two Laws.

The Massachusetts Homestead Commission, whose bill providing for the financing of workingmen's dwellings with state money was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth, has this year secured the enactment of two laws. The first continues the existence of the Commission, adds to its membership an attorney and a city planner and grants it \$3,000 for expenses. The second directs every city and every town of more than 10,000 population "to create a board to be known as the Planning Board whose duty it shall be to make careful studies of the resources, possibilities and needs of the city or town, particularly with respect to conditions which may be injurious to the public health or otherwise injurious in and about rented dwellings, and to make plans for the development of the municipality with special reference to the proper housing of its people." These Boards are required to make annual reports.

The Commission is directed to call the attention of the local authorities to this act.

Among the first cities to take advantage of the law were Springfield and Lawrence. Lawrence has been restive under the ill-fame it, like Little Falls, N. Y., secured at the time of its textile strike when newspaper men and investigators from the outside world were astonished at the unsanitary conditions and the overcrowding in the homes of the workers in these small communities that should have no problems of congestion. As a result Lawrence has itself secured greater powers for its Board of Health in dealing with room overcrowding. It has now opportunity to show if it is really in earnest.

TORONTO'S HOUSING COMPANY BEGINS BUILDING.

After two years of effort the Toronto Housing Company has now begun to put into brick and mortar its plans for inexpensive workingmen's dwellings. Some day, we hope, Mr. Beers or Mr. Armstrong will give us a plain, unvarnished

tale of the difficulties they have met and overcome in order to get what they have. Then, in the light of the future history of the company, we may be able to decide whether they have discovered a method of attacking the housing problem that it will pay others to use. Of course they, as pioneers, have met difficulties that their followers in Ontario at least will not encounter. If Hamilton, as seems likely, organizes a similar company it will find the law ready made for it and the people and the municipal authorities ready to give respectful consideration, because Toronto has already secured the law and has forced such consideration. But outside of Ontario, and especially in the United States, companies organized on the lines of that in Toronto would have to do all the pioneer work over again.

It will be remembered that the Toronto Housing Company finding difficulty in raising the needed capital, decided to secure the financial backing of the provincial and the municipal governments. After a long campaign the Toronto Board of Control was persuaded to recommend to the Council that the city be empowered, with the consent of the electors, to issue debentures to raise money to build model houses for wage-earners. The powers asked for included the right to loan money to persons, firms or companies for the purpose of erecting houses within or without the city limits, and for the Council to guarantee the bonds of any company incorporated for the purpose of erecting such houses. This recommendation was made on February 24, 1913.

On April 8 the Hon. W. J. Hanna introduced in the Provincial Legislature an act "to encourage housing accommodation in cities and towns." It had already been decided to cut out two of the Housing Company's requests, provincial support and the exemption of the company's property from taxation. The bill provided that a municipality may guarantee up to 85% the bonds of any company whose main purpose is the acquisition of land and the building of dwelling houses of moderate size to be let at a moderate rental. No dividend or distribution of profits may exceed six per cent. a year, all surplus revenue must be put into extensions or into redeeming the capital stock. After five years, at the request of the City Council, the Company shall pass a by-law providing for the

redemption of all securities. This means that in five years the scheme will become practically a public trust managed on behalf of the city by a board of trustees. The city is to have at least one representative on the Board of Directors and is to have the right to inspect the company's books at all times.

On June 2nd a delegation of prominent citizens waited on the Toronto City Council to urge it to use the powers granted by this law. After a long debate in which Toronto's need for more and better housing was freely admitted but the wisdom of the proposed method of meeting the need seriously questioned, the proposition was carried by 23 votes to 2.

The United States and Canada each has reason to be thankful that it has the other for a neighbor. With populations of much the same origin, with institutions drawn from a common source, they have in their development laid the emphasis differently: Canadians, for one thing, have been more inclined than Americans to invite governmental participation in fields that south of the border have been left to private enterprise. Governmental participation may produce quicker results, but it is a question whether it will in the long run produce as good results. Canadian experiments will, during the coming years, give Americans the data needed to reach a final conclusion on this vitally important principle.

The Toronto Housing Company furnishes a case in point. In the United States there are several housing companies, notable among them the very successful Washington Sanitary Improvement Company, which are financed entirely by private capital without any municipal or state backing. There are now being organized in Cincinnati and other American cities new housing companies whose purpose, like those of the Washington and Toronto companies, is to provide small dwellings at low rentals and with a five or six per cent. return on the capital invested. They may find it a little more difficult to sell their securities than will the Toronto company with its municipal guarantee, though this is by no means certain, for the Washington Sanitary Improvement Company's five per cent. stock is regarded as such good security that there is none of it on the market. But, having sold their stock, they will be free from interference by the govern-

ment so long as their houses are erected and maintained according to the standards prescribed by the government for all dwellings.

An indication of what government assisted companies may expect was furnished by the Toronto Board of Health on June 11, scarcely a week after the Council had voted to guarantee the Housing Company's securities. On motion of Controller McCarthy, one of the chief advocates of the guarantee at the Council meeting, the Board appointed its chairman, Alderman Rowland, who had presided at the Council meeting and had voted for the guarantee, and Dr. Charles J. Hastings, Medical Officer of Health, a committee to confer with the Toronto Housing Company with a view to having it place at the disposal of the Health Department a group of its new houses in order that people who are driven from the slums may be temporarily accommodated.

"REFUSE SUCH AGENCIES."

The Public Welfare Commission of Kansas City some time ago conducted a very thorough investigation of housing conditions, the results of which were published in an unusually good report. It then drafted a housing code which it submitted to the City Council. But Kansas City still believed that it was a city of homes without bad housing conditions of any magnitude, and declined to become interested. The Public Welfare Commission thereupon began a campaign of education. It sent its members to speak before all kinds of local organizations, such as the City Club, the Women's Club, the Hebrew Associated Charities, the Commercial Club, and the Real Estate Board. In spite of the fact that the report had been issued months before and had been distributed fairly widely, the details these speakers told, drawn though they were from the report, seemed to cause general astonishment. To hear directly from a man who has seen the things of which he speaks and who backs up his assertions with lantern slides depicting all that he has tried to describe in words, brings facts home to people with a force that no printed report can hope to equal.

This was illustrated very effectively at the annual banquet of the Real Estate Board. One of the real estate men, Mr.

John H. Atwood, went to that banquet with his speech all prepared. But it so happened that before he was called upon Mr. C. C. Stillman and Mr. Jacob Billikopf of the Public Welfare Board told their stories. Mr. Billikopf showed that infant mortality in Kansas City is from five to seven times greater in districts where there are bad housing conditions than in other parts of the city. He proved it by the city records.

Mr. Atwood was so interested in this news that he practically abandoned his prepared speech and spoke to the following effect:

"No great thing can be accomplished without a proper public sentiment, by the massing of the thoughts of men. The question which has been put up to you this night, which should remain with you until some definite action has been taken, is 'how are you going to help Billikopf and the Welfare Board remedy this appalling condition?'

"A thought has come to me, and I want each of you to take it home with you and let it burn deep into your hearts. Supposing each one of you refuse forever to become the agent for a landlord who owns property like we have seen here to-night. They are dens, not homes, though little children have to live there. What kind of a civilization can we expect when society as a whole permits a condition where children are born in squalor, wretchedness and misery and reared in the midst of ignorance and crime?

"You have been asked if you are your brother's keeper. I say you are. I am. Take this matter up in your official meeting of the board. Make it a rule to stand by it never to become an agent for such places. Let it be known that any member who does can no longer remain a member of this body. Let it be heralded broadcast that the real estate men of Kansas City are a broad minded, decent set of men with high ideals, that they want to help humanity and will not tolerate this condition. Point the finger of scorn at the man who traffics in this sort of thing. It is a traffic in human lives, the most of them innocent little children.

"It has been truly said that the Goths and Vandals of modern time are born and bred in the slums of our great cities. You real estate men have a duty at your very door greater than going to India or China to preach the gospel. Set your forces forever against the landlord who owns this kind of property. Say to him and to the world, 'we will not soil our hands with the tenements or shacks where, when we send a family, we know we are sending it to the mouth of the grave.' Do this and you will build for yourselves a monument which will last through all the ages."

CONFERENCES FOR HOUSING WORKERS.

The Third National Conference on Housing in America will be held at Cincinnati the fourth week in October. Announcements and programmes will be sent out early in the fall.

The American Public Health Association will hold its next annual conference at Colorado Springs, Sept. 9-13. As public health and housing are so intimately connected housing workers should be well represented.

The Chicago City Club assembled an unusually interesting and instructive Housing Exhibit which was open to the public from March 17 to June 15. The most spectacular feature of the Exhibit was a collection of plans for the development of a quarter section of one of the outlying districts of the city. In addition to these designs the exhibition contained many photographs and charts illustrating graphically Chicago's housing past and present. It also contained a very interesting collection of photographs and maps picturing the progress of the housing movement in Europe and America.

During the exhibition the City Club held a series of housing luncheons at which various phases of the housing problem were discussed by local workers and by visitors from other parts of this country and from Canada, England and Germany.

The Fifth National City Planning Conference was held in Chicago, May 5-7. Two of its sessions were of especial interest to housing workers. At the Fourth Conference a Committee on a Study in City Planning had been appointed with John Nolen as chairman, and John Ihlder, Field Secretary of the National Housing Association, as secretary. This committee presented a set of nine studies in the development of a 500 acre tract of land 4 miles from the center of a city of 500,000 population. The price of the land was assumed to be \$2,500 an acre. Unit costs were given for road making, sewers, etc., so that planners in different parts of the country might have a common basis for their figuring. They were then required to state the selling price or rentals of the houses which would occupy the tract when the development was complete, profits on the investment, cost of management, etc., of course being figured in. This gave the study a practical value and when the committee's report had been submitted there was a very

animated discussion in which a number of real estate men in the audience took a leading part.

The second session referred to dealt with transportation, and it seemed to be the opinion of all the speakers that "no city can afford subways." As some of our ambitious cities are anxious to imitate New York in this respect the opinion of the transportation men and other experts at the Conference should have their consideration. The chief reason given why no city can afford subways was that the cost of subway construction is so great that it can be paid for only by very heavy traffic and consequent density of population. In other words, in order to pay for a subway a city must house its people in closely packed tenements.

The Southern Sociological Congress, Atlanta, April 25-29 and the Alabama Sociological Congress, Birmingham, April 22-24, this year for the first time put housing on their programmes.

The First New Jersey Housing Conference was held in Newark on March 26. At its closing session a New Jersey Housing Association was formally organized.

NEWS NOTES.

Chicago Wins an Important Point.—In the enforcement of housing legislation it is necessary that the authorities have the power to stop work on a dwelling which is being erected in violation of the law. Last spring the Chicago Department of Health, which has charge of the enforcement of housing regulations, stopped the work on a partly completed building owned by Mrs. Minnie Blazer and Mrs. Emma Haskell because the building did not conform to the specifications submitted to the Building Bureau. The owners secured a temporary injunction against the Department but this was dissolved by Judge Kavanagh of the Superior Court on the ground that the city's right to protect its citizens from insanitary conditions should not be imperiled by court action. If the authorities were denied this power, builders could file with the Department plans that meet all the requirements of the law and then build according to their own sweet will; for experience has shown that juries will not order the demolition of a completed building, even when it is manifestly of a bad type.

Chicago Association of Commerce Recommends a Housing Survey.—The Executive Committee of the Chicago Association of Commerce has approved a report submitted by its Housing Committee which recommends a thorough housing survey of the city at a cost roughly estimated at \$100,000. The report calls attention to the fact that cities all over the world are taking stock of their housing and are seeking means to raise its standard. It shows what bad housing is and its evil effects upon the people and upon the city's prosperity, its influence in fostering incompetency and crime and in destroying the home. This survey, says the Committee, should be made by the city, and it urges the administration to consider the housing work of the Health and Building Departments as one of the most important parts of its administrative activities. The recommendations are:

"1. That the Association of Commerce lend its best efforts in inducing the city of Chicago to undertake a survey of the city as soon as practicable.

"2. Co-operation with the Building and Health Departments in every way that will lead toward the better administration of laws affecting housing conditions, and in inducing the city of Chicago to increase the appropriations of these two Departments so far as such increase will tend to improve the administration of such laws.

"3. A general educational program to arouse public sentiment on the necessity of good housing.

"4. Co-operation with other organizations engaged in promoting better housing conditions."

Cincinnati to Organize Two Five Hundred Thousand Dollar Housing Companies.—Twelve members of the Housing Committee of the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce have decided to organize two companies to erect and manage wage-earners' dwellings. At a meeting held on May 27 more than \$50,000 was subscribed, the largest sums coming from Max Senior \$20,000, C. J. Livingood, on behalf of the Emery Estate, \$25,000 and Fred A. Geier, \$10,000. At this time Mr. J. G. Schmidlapp filed his pledge of \$150,000 to the first company and promised to contribute \$100,000 more when the second company is formed. It is proposed to limit the return on the capital invested in these companies to 5% or 6%.

Corey Becomes Fairfield.—The beautiful little industrial suburb of Birmingham, Ala., which began life under the name of Corey, was rechristened a month or two ago and is now Fairfield. This little village has not developed as rapidly as its founders hoped it would, because the United States Steel Corporation never completed the great plant of the American Steel and Wire Company which was to supply most of its inhabitants. Despite this disappointment, however, Fairfield has attracted enough population to show what a pleasant community it is destined to become and now word has been received that the Steel Corporation has decided to open its wire mill at last.

Duluth Holds Its Own.—Duluth became one of the leaders among American cities by the enactment of a housing code similar to that of Columbus. This code, of course, interfered with some time honored practices on the part of a certain class of real estate men and builders. As is always the case, these men immediately claimed that the law checked the development of the city. So they demanded either that it be repealed or that it be turned over to them for revision. At the beginning they made some definite assertions in support of their general claim, such as that the code permits only a fifteen foot dwelling on a twenty-five foot lot. Such definite assertions were easily disproved by sketches showing row buildings and semi-detached buildings on twenty-five foot lots which occupied either twenty feet or all of the frontage but were so planned as to have every room lighted and ventilated by windows opening upon street, yard or a court at least five feet wide. All that was required was a little ingenuity in place of a blind following of old customs that had given Duluth dark and airless rooms. Thus answered, the objectors ceased to be definite but continued their generalities. The public and the newspapers have declined to take these complaints seriously, however, and the City Council has virtually proclaimed that it wishes to be shown how the code works any hardship before it will consider revision. At the time the code was passed the Duluth News-Tribune said editorially, "In passing the housing ordinance the Council has performed a service for Duluth that time will demonstrate is the most

important act for the well-being of the city that has ever been placed among its laws."

Duluth's Steel Corporation Suburb.—When the United States Steel Corporation founded Gary it took the greatest pains in planning its mills but paid little attention to planning the town. Now that Gary has grown to be a city the Corporation realizes its mistake, for it finds that the efficiency of the plant is directly affected by the way its operatives live. So at Birmingham the Corporation gave mild encouragement to the proposal that Corey—now Fairfield—should be planned. The result was convincing, and now that the Corporation is about to found a third town, near Duluth, it is considering very carefully the street system of the new community and the types of houses that shall be provided for its workers. There will be no more Garys.

Elmira Takes Stock of Its Dwellings.—Miss Esther Denton, of the Elmira Housing Committee, has, during the past winter, made an investigation of local housing conditions the results of which, as usual, surprised and somewhat dismayed comfortable citizens. On the completion of her report the Committee sent to the Board of Health a list of 91 violations of present regulations—Elmira makes no pretense to having an adequate housing code now. The Board responded to this communication most courteously and promised the violations would be attended to immediately. Meanwhile the conditions discovered during Miss Denton's investigation have shown the need for better and more thorough legislation so it is probable that Elmira will be one of several third class cities in New York State which next fall will demand housing codes.

Frankfort, Kentucky, Enacts and Tests an Ordinance Prohibiting Unsanitary Dwellings.—Under the inspiration of Mrs. Albion Fellows Bacon, secretary of the Indiana State Housing Association and one of the Directors of the National Housing Association, Frankfort, Ky., passed an ordinance forbidding the use of any building, house or room intended or designed for residence purposes which is or may become unsanitary or unsafe, detrimental to the public or injurious to the health or morals of the community. The first attempt to enforce the ordinance led to its being taken into the courts which decided that the city acted within its powers.

Hamilton, Ont., May Guarantee Housing Bonds.—The example of Toronto seems to be affecting Hamilton, whose Board of Trade recently appointed a Housing Committee whose purposes are: 1. To gather information as to the needs of the city. 2. The organization of a company to provide for workingmen small, well-built houses on reasonable terms, situated in properly planned areas. 3. To take advantage of the housing act just passed by the Provincial Legislature and petition the City Council to pass a by-law to guarantee the securities of the contemplated Hamilton Housing Company.

Hartford Keeps Its House Clean.—As our readers know, the Civic Club of Hartford about two years ago employed Miss Mary E. Heilman to make a housing investigation of the city. She found deplorable conditions, a public ignorant of the facts and officials either ignorant or indifferent. One of the officials when told of the heaps of refuse and filth in Hartford cellars seemed to find the matter one for congratulation because of the interesting finds there awaiting archeologists of the future. Probably nowhere outside of New England, where the historical sense has been so highly developed, would this idea have occurred to a member of a health board.

Finding direct appeals vain, Miss Heilman and the Civic Club used publicity. The Courant responded nobly to their request that it help make Hartford clean and wholesome. As a result the officials began to see that the health of the present and future generations is more important than providing treasure troves of broken pottery, spring mattresses, tin cans, etc., for the successors of Parkman and Prescott who might some day try to reconstruct our present civilization by studying the cast-off possessions of the Italians who inhabit Hartford's tenements. So the Board of Health appointed a Housing Committee and cleaned up cellars, removed privies, cut windows into dark rooms and in other ways made Hartford a more livable city.

Last summer Miss Heilman left the city and did not return until January. She found that the good work had continued during the interval. From then until the end of May she gave it increasing impetus. Now she has left, probably for good, but there remain a corps of volunteer housing inspectors who

know bad housing when they see it—though they are seeing less and less of it—and a visiting house-keeper, part of whose duties it will be to raise housing standards.

Los Angeles Housing Commission Becomes a Bureau of the Health Department.—On May 3 the Los Angeles Housing Commission ceased to have a separate existence; from now on it will be a Bureau of the Health Department. This change should make for greater efficiency, for the Commission had power to supervise only the house courts while the Bureau will supervise house courts,—of which there are said to be 601 in the city, tenement houses—which until the past year have been practically unregulated, lodging houses, hotels, and premises or tracts of land on which are grouped or located two or more habitations for human beings. The Bureau consists of seven members serving without pay, appointed by the Health Commissioner, an executive secretary at \$110 per month, one inspector at \$100 per month, three inspectors at \$80 per month and one stenographer at \$75 per month. At least two of the unpaid members of the Bureau must be women. Each member becomes an Assistant Health Commissioner and may exercise the powers of a regular police officer.

Montreal Proposes Great Improvements.—The Housing Committee prophesied in the preceding issue of *Housing Betterment* has been formed with the title Greater Montreal Housing and Planning Association. Its objects as stated are: "To lend support to those who may be entrusted with the drawing up of a general plan for the Island, to improve the housing conditions of the working classes and to agitate for general building by-laws and health regulations." The three principal committees are: General Plan, Housing and Legislation. Senator Dandurand read a resolution asking the Association to petition the City Council for a complete revision of the present codes on health, sanitation and building by-laws, on the ground that these are at present faulty and inadequate; also that an adequate staff of housing inspectors, including women, be appointed. Lady Drummond offered a resolution that the city authorities be requested to draw up a code of sanitary and building by-laws with special reference to housing.

It is also proposed that land be secured in the suburbs for the erection of moderate priced workingmen's cottages and that some of the worst slum areas in the old city be cleared and better dwellings built there.

New York Grapples with Sky-scraper Problems.—While some of the smaller cities are glorying in the erection of their first sky-scrappers, New York has begun to take thought how it may regulate a form of building that creates many municipal problems. It is admitted that for business quarters—not for dwellings—the tall building has advantages. But the unregulated erection of tall buildings brings evils that often counterbalance these advantages. Streets laid out in an earlier day are proving inadequate to the burden of traffic they are called upon to bear; transportation lines, surface, elevated and subways, cannot carry the population of these great hives to and from their work; the sewers and water mains are unable to do what is expected of them, and, most important for the smaller cities which scarcely hope for New York or Chicago congestion, these tall buildings darken the lower floors of neighboring structures making them inconvenient, unwholesome and—unprofitable.

In view of all this, Borough President McAneny of Manhattan has appointed an Advisory Commission on the Height, Size and Arrangement of Buildings. This Commission has organized and begun to hold hearings. Two of the proposals submitted to it are: 1st, that a uniform cornice line shall be established at, say, 100 feet above curb level and that any portion of a building rising above this line shall be set back on all sides sufficiently so that it cannot interfere with the light and ventilation of the street or of neighboring buildings; 2nd that the city be divided into districts with greater restrictions in the outlying sections than in those already dominated by sky-scrappers.

It is hoped that the Commission will find some means of preventing the six-story tenement house, which is the predominant type of dwelling in Manhattan, from invading sections now occupied by smaller houses.

Philadelphia Seeks Better House Plans.—Though Philadelphia has in its 200,000 small houses approached nearer to a solution of the housing problem than the other great cities

of America, its housing workers are not satisfied. At a meeting in the City Club on June 27 of representatives of the Suburban Planning Association, the Philadelphia Housing Commission, the Octavia Hill Association, and the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects it was decided to ask architects and builders to submit designs for workingmen's houses, the best to be adopted as a standard for future buildings throughout the city. The design is to provide for a two-family house—distinctly a step backward—which is to be constructed of substantial material, with better accommodations and more attractively designed than the present Philadelphia house. Moreover it is to be easier and cheaper to build.

Portland, Ore., Takes Up Housing.—Portland in the course of its investigation of the cost of living, on which was based the minimum wage law recently enacted by the Oregon legislature, studied its housing conditions. What it found was not satisfactory, so the local committee under the leadership of the Rev. E. V. O'Hara is now working for a housing code that will bring Portland's dwellings up to a wholesome standard.

Richmond's Housing Society Incorporates.—The Society for the Betterment of Housing and Living Conditions recently suffered a severe blow in the death of its president, Andrew H. Christian. Mr. Christian had been the mainstay of the Society during its first year and largely to his efforts is due its success in securing a recognized standing in the community. Despite this loss, however, the Society has continued the plans it had formed under his leadership and on June 4th it secured a charter which empowers it to buy and sell lands and houses, to collect rents, to receive and hold bequests and donations and in general to aid in improving home living conditions. The maximum amount of real estate it may hold is 1,000 acres.

During the past winter the secretary of the Society, Gustavus A. Weber, has devoted his energies chiefly to a campaign of education, which included a successful cleaning of the neglected sections of the city. Among the main purposes of the Society is co-operation with the health authorities in securing better sanitary conditions and the enactment of more adequate housing legislation.

Quincy, Illinois, Opens Its Eyes.—Quincy has a typhoid fever epidemic. Perhaps that is the reason the Whig sent C. H. Bowers out to see how the other half lives. He learned just what investigators in other towns the size of Quincy have learned. Out of a dozen places visited he found not more than two fit for habitation. Some of these places had been condemned by the Board of Health, but the owners continued to rent them just the same. He found dark, unventilated rooms, he found houses without water supply, etc., etc. But this is all commonplace. The interesting thing is the question, "What is Quincy to do about it?"

Sacramento Seeks Advice.—Sacramento is the capital of California. All of us have seen picture postal cards showing its palm trees, which seem to some eastern eyes indicative of things greatly to be desired. But Sacramento finds that it has some things that are not to be desired. It was visited by Mrs. Johanna von Wagner a few months ago, during her investigation of housing conditions in California cities, and then it learned about these other things. Now it is seeking advice as to how to get rid of them. The Chamber of Commerce appointed a Housing Committee which has adopted the program issued by the National Housing Association. It is continuing its investigations, it is educating the community, it is drafting housing legislation and it is planning for the future growth of the city. It has also taken advantage of Dr. Werner Hegemann's visit to this country to call him in and ask him questions. Sacramento is so near San Francisco that it needs to protect itself against the cheap tenement contagion.

Washington Determined to Get Results.—By the time the next National Housing Conference meets there will, unless all signs fail, be good news to report from the capital of the nation. For many years a small group of people in Washington have been trying to get rid of the alley slums which are little less than a national disgrace. At last they have aroused attention and Congress seems inclined to do something effective. The alleys of Washington should be supplanted by a system of minor streets that will provide for the economic development of the many deep blocks in the city and will furnish good sites for inexpensive small houses.



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